

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

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R 191355Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8550

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 3995

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (P A R A 4 N U M B E R E D)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, IZ, KU

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF KUWAITI-IRAQI BORDER DISCUSSIONS

REF: KUWAIT 3669 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: KUWAITI DEFMINT/INT MIN SHAIKH SA'AD AL-
ABDULLA TOLD AMBASSADOR JULY 19 THAT RECENT VISIT TO BAGHDAD
TO DISCUSS KUWAITI-IRAQI BORDER QUESTIONS WAS FRUITFUL IN
THAT IT RESULTED IN ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERMINISTERIAL
COMMITTEE, A LOW-LEVEL BORDER COMMITTEE AND AN AGREEMENT FOR
A ONE KILOMETER WITHDRAWAL ON EACH SIDE OF THE ARAB LEAGUE
"LINE." END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MEETING JULY 19 KUWAITI DEF MIN/INT MIN SHAIKH SA'AD
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AL-ABDULLA TOLD ME HE CONSIDERED THAT HIS RECENT VISIT TO
BAGHDAD (JUNE 27-JULY 3) HAD FRUITFUL RESULTS IN
TERMS OF INITIATING PRACTICAL DISCUSSIONS ON KUWAITI-
IRAQI BORDER PROBLEMS. DURING HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS
COUNTERPART, IRAQI INTERIOR MINISTER AL-DURI, IT WAS
AGREED THAT AN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE WOULD BE FORMED
TO DISCUSSS ALL PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE LONG-STANDING

KUWAITI-IRAQI BORDER DISPUTE. SHAIKH SA'AD SAID HE HAD WRITTEN A FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO AL-DURI SUGGESTING THAT HE AND HIS COUNTERPART LEAD THEIR DELEGATIONS ON THIS COMMITTEE. HE EXPECTED THAT THE INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE WOULD MEET PERIODICALLY IN KUWAIT AND BAGHDAD UNTIL A CONCRETE AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED ON THE BORDER PROBLEMS. SA'AD REMARKED THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS COMMITTEE WAS, IN FACT, A REAL STEP FORWARD BECAUSE HERETOFORE THE IRAQIS HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO DISCUSS THE DEMARKATION THE BORDER IN ANY ABSENCE OF KUWAITI CONCESSIONS WITH RESPECT TO WARBAH AND BUBIYAN ISLANDS. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY, SHAIKH SA'AD SAID THAT THE IRAQIS HAD RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR LEASING HALF OF BUBIYAN ISLAND BUT HE HAD TOLD THEM THAT KUWAIT COULD NOT CONSIDER THIS.

3. SHAIKH SA'AD ALSO REPORTED THAT A KUWAITI OFFICIAL STATIONED AT ABDALI AND A IRAQI OFFICER LOCATED AT THEIR SAFFWAN BORDER POST WOULD CONSTITUTE A LOW-LEVEL COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH ANY ROUTINE BORDER PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT ARISE. THIS COMMITTEE WAS DESIGNED TO RESOLVE MINOR DISPUTES THAT IN THE PAST HAVE ALWAY BEEN ESCALATED TO THE MINISTERIAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

4. THE MAIN PRACTICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SHAIKH SA'AD'S VISIT TO BAGHDAD, HOWEVER, WAS A MUTUAL AGREEMENT BY BOTH COUNTRIES TO WITHDRAW ONE KILOMETER FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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EACH SIDE OF THE ARAB LEAGUE "LINE" (A ROAD BUILT BY THE ARAB LEAGUE FORCES STATIONED IN KUWAIT DURING THE 1961 FLARE-UP OF THE BORDER DISPUTE WHICH RUNS INLAND FROM THE COAST JUST BELOW OMM QASR). THIS ROAD HAS BEEN USED BY BOTH IRAQIS AND KUWAIT PATROLS IN THE BORDER AREA. AT THE PRESENT TIME SOME IRAQI TROOPS ARE LOCATED SOUTH OF THIS ROAD AND SOME KUWAITI TROOPS NORTH OF IT. THE AGREEMENT SPECIFIES THAT EACH SIDE WILL WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS ONE KILOMETER FROM THE ROAD INSIDE ITS OWN TERRITORY, THUS LEAVING A TWO KILOMETER SEPARATION BETWEEN KUWAITI AND IRAQI FORCES ALONG THE DISPUTED BORDER. INTERIOR MINSTRY UNDERSEC AL-THUWAINY IS MEETING JULY 19 WITH THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF BASRA AT THE BORDER AND LATER IN BASRA TO DISCUSS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS AGREEMENT.

5. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, SHAIKH SA'AD SAID THAT HE HAD NOT LIFTED THE BAN ON KUWAITI LAND TRAVEL BY KUWAITI NATIONALS ACROSS THE BORDER TO BASRA, BUT WOULD CONSIDER REMOVING THIS RESTRICTION IF THE WITHDRAWAL ARRANGEMENTS WORK OUT SUCCESSFULLY.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE SMALL

IN TERMS OF REACHING A FINAL SOLUTION OF THE BORDER PROBLEM,
THE RESULTS OF SHIAKH SA'AD'S BAGHDAD VISIT DO SEEM TO
INDICATE A STEP FORWARD IN THE DIRECTION OF ITS RESOLUTION.
THEY MAY ALSO REFLECT THE INTENTION ON THE PART OF
THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT TO SOFTEN ITS PREVIOUS HARD
LINE VIS-A-VIS KUWAIT AND ALSO THE OTHER GULF STATES ON A
VARIETY OF MATTERS. I WOULD SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THE
DELIBERATIONS OF THE INTERMINISERIAL COMMITTEE WILL
PROBABLY BE EXTENDED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME, BECAUSE THE
IRAQIS UNDOUBTEDLY WILL STILL SEEK TO OBTAIN
KUWAIT CONCESSIONS WITH RESPECT TO WARBAH AND BUBIYAN ISLANDS.
IF THE BORDER SEPARATION ARRANGEMENT IS FULLY IMPLEMENTED,
HOWEVER, IT SHOULD HELP TO REDUCE THE TENSION WHICH HAS
EXISTED BETWEEN KUWAIT AND IRAQ ON THIS QUESTION SINCE THE
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BEGINNING OF THE LATEST FLARE-UP OF THE BORDER DISPUTE IN
SEPTEMBER 1976.
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